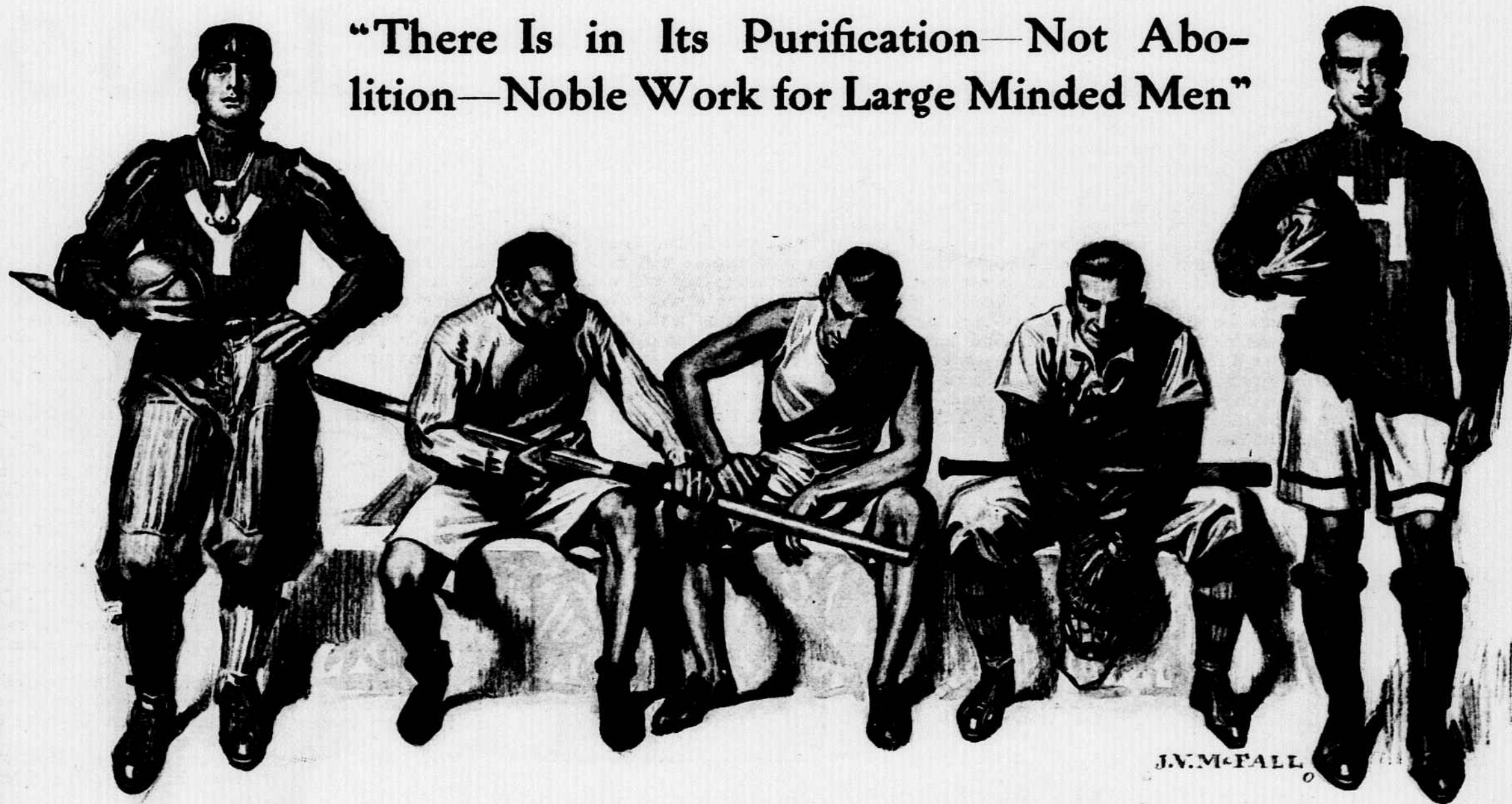


# COLLEGE ATHLETICS

"There Is in Its Purification—Not Abolition—Noble Work for Large Minded Men"



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COLLEGE loyalty is often ancestral, often traditional to this or that preparatory school; but for many young fellows it begins with the freshman year and with intercollegiate athletics. Sometimes it begins spontaneously in the enthusiasm of a new and larger life; sometimes it is pumped by artificial initiatory processes or by songs and mass meetings. The songs and the mass meetings satisfy the brass band instinct of youth and celebrate past and future athletic contests, wherein the university for convenience is treated as perennially invincible,—sometimes, as at Harvard, in glaring defiance of the facts. When we consider how much of older people's enthusiasm for the opera or for philanthropy or for the horse show is nothing but fashion and persistence, we cannot wonder that college loyalty in its early stages is somewhat forced; yet with every allowance for traditional and coöperative emotion, and for a boy's love of athletics, we cannot but wonder upon what meat it feeds that in one short month it has grown so great. Two Exeter boys face two Andover boys in school football. Every one of the four is filled with school enthusiasm and with a rivalry as keen as that of colleges. One of each pair goes to Harvard College and one to Yale. Early in their freshman year the four meet again on the football field, each playing beside an old adversary against an old comrade, each sinking old enmity (for it is scarcely less) in new enthusiasm. "Why not?" some one may say. "Football is a mere game; why not change partners?" But football as played in America to-day between schools or colleges is not a mere game; still less is it a mere exhibition of hard trained strength and skill. It is to the typical undergraduate mind the supreme expression of college loyalty; and everything that touches it becomes a question of allegiance to an *Alma Mater*. An intercollegiate contest assumes in the minds of players, coaches, students, graduates, and the affiliated public the importance of war.

## Serious Side of Football

IF the analogy between football and war has its amusing side, it has its serious side also; for as in war all is fair, so to some minds all is fair in and about football,—and not fair only, but essential to loyal service. Even in war honest people were at variance as to the ethics of General Funston's capture of Aguinaldo; and in football—which, after all, is not quite war—ethical questions are still more perplexing. Indeed, you may as well prophesy whether an individual will find "Man and Superman" delightful or disgusting, as whether he will declare certain acts in a game of football patriotic or rascally.

One thing, however, should not be forgotten. The great out of door games, football and baseball,

are strategic; and strategy is as much a part of them as of war or chess. Nothing could be unfairer than to inveigh against them as purely physical and brainless games, yet to resent in them as dishonest the playing of wit against wit, of intellect against intellect, the strategy of the moment or of the long calculating hours. I have heard used against alleged trickery in athletics arguments that would prove it deceitful for a runner to dodge a man who tries to stop him; and since it would be even a worse wrong to run into an opponent, the opposed player steering between the deceptive and the brutal has no refuge but a polite standstill. Doubtless there are still persons of intelligence who can prove that the honest pitcher throws a ball to be hit and not to be hit at,—persons of intelligence, which, however, they have not applied to some forms of outdoor sport. Do these persons play chess?

## Story of a Bad Knee

IN a recent intercollegiate game of football, an end who was not lame limped to draw on himself the enemy's attack and thus to protect from attack his fellow end who had a bad knee. Of this bad knee, by the way, the opposing team was kept in ignorance through false reports to the press. For the false reports to the press nothing respectable can be said; and I dismiss them for the time being. The end rush's strategy, whether indigenous or planted in him by the coach, presents interesting questions of right and wrong. To one graduate, for example, it illustrates the evil fact that modern football is a bad game for American youth, because so much of it is based on the strategy of war and because war—even necessary war—is full of abominations. "If the Yale men," he says (for the sake of concreteness we will call the opposing colleges Yale and Harvard),—"if the Yale men were trying to kill the Harvard men, and a Harvard man could be saved by Jones's pretending to be lame, I should be in favor of that sort of conduct on his part; but the Yale men are only trying to get a leather ball toward a goal." Now, whether his view of strategy in football is sound or unsound, his assertion that intercollegiate football is a mere attempt to move a leather ball toward a goal shows him blind to that for which, more than for anything else, a great contest stands in the minds of players, spectators, and alumni, the country through. When the Federation of Harvard Clubs, meeting to discuss grave university problems, receives with a burst of enthusiasm a football song,—written and performed

by a distinguished middle aged delegate,—the refrain of which is,—

Pom tiddley om pom, pom tiddley om pom,  
Pom tiddley om pom pay,—

when the Governor of New York leads the cheering between the halves of one game, and later, as President of the United States, sends a congratulatory telegram to the victors in another,—it is not because a few young fellows have carried a leather ball to a goal, or even because they have proved themselves active and strong and brave; it is because at their time of life the position of that leather ball is the symbol of what means to them as much as anything on earth, the success and the glory of the college that they love. To say that Yale or Harvard is only trying to move a leather ball is like saying that a standard bearer is only trying to grasp a stick with a piece of cloth on it. No man can comprehend collegiate sport who closes his eyes to symbolism and romance, to the "bit of red ribbon that a man would die to win." Nor can any man comprehend youth who holds it to account for commercial inaccuracies in things of the spirit. At a recent game of baseball a college catcher running for a foul fly sprang over the players' bench and caught the ball in midair. From one point of view he was a fool; but he was the kind of fool I like a boy to be.

## Right and Wrong of It

EVEN Jones's limp, instead of being a "dirty trick," as a former athlete has called it, is conceivably a piece of patriotic self-sacrifice, like exposing oneself to draw the enemy's fire and thereby to save a friend and win a victory for one's country. Or again, Jones's limp may be regarded as not truly patriotic, because the strategy in it was, so to speak, artificial, because the information conveyed in it was gratuitously, officiously false, like the deliberate lies sent by coaches to the Associated Press. To persons who hold this view, such tricks as dodging a man that tries to stop you, and throwing a baseball suddenly in an unexpected direction are inherent in the games themselves; whereas pretending to be lame, or tempting a man off his base by tucking the ball under your arm, or gaining time for breath by breaking your shoestring, though it may help you win a game for the college that you love, may help you at too great a cost to you and to her.

Others see in Jones's behavior a low view of his adversaries' honor. No decent college, they declare, would attack a lame man; and, not applying to football what they apply to ordinary affairs, they maintain that the only manly playing is directed against the strongest part of the line, not the weakest (these are the same people who condemn the game for its want of intelligence). Still others retort